



HEADQUARTERS  
NORTH CENTRAL REGION, CIVIL AIR PATROL  
United States Air Force Auxiliary  
Post Office Box 11755  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52410-1755

16 January 2008

**Crisis Communications Plan**

**Applicability:**

This annual plan, required to be prepared annually by CAPR 190-1, applies to the North Central Region Headquarters. It is the responsibility of the Region Staff and Wing Commanders to be familiar with this plan and use it as a guide for Wing Public Affairs Staff in developing Wing Plans and in the approval of subordinate unit plans.

This plan does not override normal command functions and decisions of incident command staff, however its contents should be part of their training.

This plan supports the CAP Public Affairs Crisis Policy as published on the National CAP Website. (Link: [http://www.cap.gov/visitors/members/public\\_affairs/public\\_affairs\\_crisis\\_policy/](http://www.cap.gov/visitors/members/public_affairs/public_affairs_crisis_policy/))

**The purpose of this plan is to:**

- Ensure the flow of accurate and timely information to region leadership, staff, the media and the public during a crisis.
- Provide the media with a reasonable level of access per CAP regulations and policy.
- Make it possible for Public Affairs Staff to develop unified messages in a crisis.
- Minimize unnecessary damage to the integrity and reputation of the region & CAP.
- Counteract inaccurate criticism by providing accurate and honest information.

A crisis situation is defined as any situation deemed by region staff as having a major impact on the region, CAP as an organization and the public. Examples of a crisis situation may include incidents at CAP activities involving serious injury and or loss of life, terrorism, a member death, natural disasters, major crimes or major disruptions of operations. Crisis situations may include police investigations or other situations that require a public response.

This plan is not intended to change the way emergencies are initially reported. All applicable CAP regulations will be followed in these initial and subsequent reports.

It is the goal of this crisis communications plan to establish guidelines for dealing with a variety of situations, and to ensure that leaders and communicators are familiar with those procedures and their roles in the event of a crisis. The plan is designed to be

used in conjunction with the normal decision-making hierarchy of the wing and does not supplant that decision-making process.

Each crisis or emergency will require a unique public information response. The extent of the response will depend on the nature of the crisis.

**Assumptions:**

It is almost always the WRONG decision to withhold comment during a crisis situation. Doing this allows other entities to portray Civil Air Patrol in ways that may be inaccurate and unflattering. Rather, carefully crafted comments, provided early in the crisis and updated regularly, best position CAP as professional and responsible, whatever the specific crisis situation may be.

Often the only information the public receives about an emergency is through the media; therefore, media relations is an essential component of any crisis plan. Timing is critical and a response must be issued as soon as possible with follow-up bulletins, as required.

With the advent of Internet technology, rumors can spread quickly via email, blogs and online forums. Therefore, it is critical that responses be issued as quickly as possible via various channels of online communication, both formal (such as the wing website and listservs) and informally.

A crisis situation could be big news and is likely to result in more public exposure for the wing than dozens of “good news” stories.

**Crisis Communications Team:**

A Crisis Communications Team (CCT) is established that consists of key personnel. Membership of the CCT may vary slightly, depending on the details of the crisis, but will typically consist of the following members:

- Region Commander
- Region Vice Commander
- Region Chief of Staff
- Public Affairs Director (Region PAO)
- Legal Officer
- Other staff with experience in working a crisis, or with positions relevant to the details of the crisis
- Expert sources as needed

It is the Region Commander's expectation that crisis situations be resolved and worked at the local and Wing Levels. The Region's CCT and its members are available as consultants to Wing CCT's as needed and appropriate.

When the scope of the crisis/incident reaches beyond the borders or capabilities of a unit or wing, the Region CCT will assume control of the situation as directed by the Region Commander.

National Headquarters will be immediately made aware of the Region CCT's activation thru normal channels and or the National Operations Center.

A roster of the region's CCT can be found as Appendix A to this plan.

The CCT exists to advise the commander and craft the message during a crisis. The Commander makes final decisions after advice from the CCT.

The CCT List should be updated twice a year on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and 30<sup>th</sup> of June.

**Crisis Center:** It is expected that crisis teams will work virtually through e-mail, phones and conference calls. If the need exists to set up a crisis center, commanders are expected to use their best judgment as to location, size and scope of activities. The Region PAO will be consulted prior to standing up a crisis center.

**Crisis Materials:** The PAO is assigned the task of maintaining materials to assist in the management of a crisis. As a minimum the Region PA Staff will maintain the following materials (may be electronic):

- This Plan and the plans of the 7 NCR Wings
- Roster of the team
- Contact information for all Wing Commanders, relevant region/wing staff members, CAP National HQ and CAP-USAF
- Media List (from most current online sources)
- CAP Fact sheets to include locally produced fact sheets on each wing and the region
- Positive statistics about CAP (Most of this data can be obtained from, CAPWatch or E-services, and national headquarters. Method of collection and assembly will be up to the Region PA Staff)

**Spokesperson:** The Commander and PAO are the spokespeople for the organization and will be expected to work with local media. Other CAP members will give information about the crisis to the media only when authorized by the commander or PAO. Otherwise, members should respectfully refer media representatives to the crisis center or designated spokesperson. When the crisis primarily affects a subordinate unit, the Region Commander and PAO are available to assist units and can serve as a local spokesperson as needed.

**Electronic Resources:** Email and Web messages can be important to the way CAP tells its stories during crises. External information provided to the media should be placed on the region website (and appropriate subordinate unit websites) concurrently with their release to the media. The PAO will provide internal information to members

about the crisis using email and other channels as appropriate to communicate with CAP members and the public. These electronic communications will be approved by the commander before being disseminated.

### **Multiple Crisis Communication Teams:**

Should a crisis have high severity or affect a large geographic area, Crisis Communications Teams may be activated at multiple levels of the organization. The PAO at each level should coordinate promptly with higher headquarters when a CCT has been activated. When a determination is made as to which level of the organization is the PRIMARY source for media information, other CCTs should provide support and be prepared to reinforce the same messages, if contacted by the media.

### **Phases of Response**

**Immediate:** The Region Commander and the Region PAO (in consultation with the local Wing Commander/PAO) will determine if an official statement should be prepared and released. If warranted, they and the CCT will develop answers to specific questions that may be asked by the media and the media statement (release).

In some cases, it may be appropriate for CAP to make an initial announcement of an accident or incident. In others, it may be better to wait and "see if the media notices."

**Regardless, if representatives of the media inquire, CAP should make a prompt response and never answer "no comment."**

As part of this phase, talking points should be developed. These are short simple messages that tell our story, emphasizing positive points. They should be agreed to by the crisis team and delivered to all members authorized to speak to the media.

In a major crisis, the media may contact CAP staff at the local, wing and region levels. Is it typically MORE effective for CAP if multiple authorized spokespeople all talk with the media using the same talking points, as opposed to a single member being the ONLY person to grant interviews. As a result, in a major crisis generating broad media attention, there should be authorized spokespeople at the local, wing and region levels.

Commanders and their PAO's should not be afraid to work with local media in a crisis situation. Many times the local media covering the crisis will be the same media that will cover your unit in good times. CAP is not afraid to tell the truth. Tell it in a way that best reflects on CAP and move on. You will build a better long term relationship if you are candid in bad or rough times.

The PAO will obtain basic information (type of crisis/emergency; time of emergency; actions taken; areas and number of people involved; injuries or fatalities; extent of damage) and prepare an official news release. The PAO will brief staff and other area commanders who may have to answer questions from local media.

### **Key PAO Tasks**

- The PA staff will verify all sources of information.
- The PAO will clear news releases with the Commander as quickly as possible before releasing to the media.
- The PAO will log and document all media inquiries.

**Ongoing Period:** In an ongoing crisis, the PAO (with the help of the CCT) as appropriate will:

- Provide, via the news media and on the web, the public and constituents with basic information about the crisis.
- Provide, via electronic mail or other means such as radio, the membership with basic information about the crisis. Insure that copies of all updates are concurrently sent to higher HQ.
- Keep the public, media and constituents informed of the situation and provide advice on what they should or should not do to prevent further damage or loss of life, panic or interference with emergency response efforts. Information will be provided via the wing website and via news releases to the area media.
- Log all media inquiries and responses.
- Instruct the public on how to obtain further advice or information.

**Recovery Period:** The PAO will issue media updates for as long as necessary, then scale back activities as warranted. Such updates will be posted online. Upon termination of the crisis situation, the PAO will schedule a meeting of all key players to review all actions taken and lessons learned. These will be included in an after-action report to be forwarded to the Commander and other appropriate leaders and/or departments and to higher headquarters Public Affairs.

**Updates:** This plan will be reviewed and updated every year in the month of January.

The CCT should interact periodically to discuss the plan and any updates. The Commander will convene these meetings. Results of the meetings and revisions of the plan are to be documented and filed with the plan. Copies of this plan should be addressed to all members listed in the plan and any other personnel who might play a role in the event of a crisis.

**Training:** Region CCT members will be required to view the "Crisis Communication Presentation," during the month of January. After viewing the presentation the member will acknowledge to the Region PAO via email that he/she has reviewed the presentation. A compiled register will be filed with the plan and record of plan review/updates.

//////Signed/////

STEVEN W. KUDDER, Colonel, CAP  
Commander

**DISTRIBUTION: 1 Each (Electronic)**

NCR Wing Commanders

NCR Statt

NCR Wing and Unit PAO's

CAP NHQ/PA

CAP/PA

**RECORD OF REVIEW:**

Review Date	Commander's Initials

## Appendix A: North Central Region Crisis Communications Team

<b>Name</b>	<b>Duty Assignment/Team Role</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
Colonel Sean P. Fagan	Region Commander	237 Savoy Drive Lake St. Louis, MO home: 636.561.6085 work: 314.831.7000 cell: 636.345.1630 call: NC 1 cc@ncr.cap.gov
Colonel Thomas D Weston	Vice Commander	2516 6th St NW Minot, ND 58703 home: 701.839.0344 work: 701.857.7817 cell: 701.240.9052 fax: 701.857.7845 call: NC 2 cv@ncr.cap.gov
Lt. Col. Mike Marek	Communications Team Leader, CAP NHQ	29 S. Crawford Road Vermillion, SD 57069 Home 605-624-2332 Work: 402-375-7421 Cell: 605-202-0163 Call: NC 15 michael@themareks.com
Capt Al Pabon	Director of Public Affairs	5700 Boone Ave North New Hope, Mn 55428 home: 612.296.0474 work: 612.348.4285 fax: 612.348.7377 call: NC 35 pao@ncr.cap.gov
Major David Miller	Group Public Affairs Officer	PO Box 422 Grover, MO 63040-0422 Home: Work: 314-966-8300 xfiler@pol.net

**Appendix B:**  
**CAP Leadership/MIO/PAO Talking Points:**  
**Fatalities or serious injuries sustained by CAP members.**

Adapt these general talking points as appropriate to the specific accident or incident. In many cases, the primary comments in bold will be all that needs to be said. Add the rest of the information only if asked.

**1. Our hearts go out to the families of the members involved, and to all of the CAP members in \_\_\_\_ (where the members are from) \_\_\_\_ who work hard to serve their state and country with a professional level of skill, even though they are volunteers.**

**2. CAP has an outstanding Flying Safety Record -- about one third of the number of accidents in the general aviation community per 100,000 hours flown.**

**Additional information, only if asked to elaborate:** When you consider that CAP's missions are typically flown only 1,000 feet above the ground, leaving little time to react in an emergency situation, CAP's low accident rate is even more significant. Though CAP flies in a high-risk environment, one of the reasons our accident rate is so low is because we have successfully used ORM or operational risk management - a technique developed by the Air Force safety community and eagerly adopted by CAP.

The National Transportation Safety Board's accident rates for general aviation over the past three years as compared to CAP's are as follows:

	NTS	CAP
2004	6.49	5.23
2005	7.20	2.8
2006	6.64	1.84

- Every one of our pilots takes a flight safety check at least annually, and they are evaluated on their ability to fly mission profiles biennially.
- We have a safety education program whereby both aircrew and non-aircrew are briefed on safety issues during monthly safety meetings.
- Also, every CAP wing is given an evaluation on its ability to perform search and rescue/disaster relief missions biennially.



**3. CAP aircrews are absolute professionals and highly trained in all aspects of aerial search and rescue [including mountain flying techniques].**

**Additional information, only if asked to elaborate:** Aerial search and rescue is clearly a demanding mission, given the requirement to fly typically only 1,000 feet above the ground,. However, our aircrew members fully understand the dangers associated with SAR missions and train hard to minimize them, but they consider their duties to be critical. Over the years, CAP has been credited with saving on average about 75 lives annually.

**4. Civil Air Patrol maintains its aircraft rigorously to standards that meet or exceed FAA standards.** The maintenance is timely, thorough and carried out by FAA-certified mechanics CAP-wide. Bottom line -- CAP maintenance policies are stricter or as strict as general aviation standards in America, with greater emphasis placed on regular aircraft inspections throughout the fleet.

**5. There is no way I could speculate on what may have caused this to happen. I am sure it will be the subject of an official investigation.**

**Additional information, if asked to elaborate:** Do NOT be trapped into discussing possible or hypothetical causes or explanations for what happened. Rather, go back to point #1 -- the investigation WILL happen, and meanwhile, our big concern is for the families and fellow members of the people killed/injured.

**Note:**

Do not feel that you must rush an answer. If you have to pause 10 seconds after the question is asked to formulate your answer, no problem. Remember that TV stations, in particular, will probably only use 10 or 15 seconds worth of your actual words, anyway.

**Appendix C:**  
**CAP Leadership/MIO/PAO Talking Points:**  
**CAP members accused of sexual misconduct**

Adapt these general talking points as appropriate to the specific situation.

1. The status of the accused is:
  - No longer a member
  - Suspended
  - Other
2. No complaint has been filed with CAP adult or child or any family member (assuming this is true).
3. The CAP Cadet Protection Program ensures that more than one adult member is always present on activities with our youth members, and in particular our rules prohibit private "one-on-one" interaction between individual youth and adult members.

**Notes:**

In a media interview. Always find ways to come back to these points.

If the reporter asks you about your feelings or emotions, dodge the question. "My feelings and emotions are that I am glad that CAP has procedures in place to prevent inappropriate contact from taking place."

Avoid repeating back the words the reporter uses in asking the question. For example a reporter might ask "would you say that CAP was lucky that there were no problems with this person?" If you repeat "was lucky" either to say CAP WAS lucky, or to say , "No, I wouldn't say CAP was lucky," you are allowing the reporter to put words in your mouth that may then be quoted.

Avoid answering hypothetical questions.

Do not feel that you must rush an answer. If you have to pause 10 seconds after the question is asked to formulate your answer, no problem. Remember that they will probably only use 10 or 15 seconds worth of your actual words, anyway.